

# The INQUIRER

90p

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The voice of British and Irish Unitarians and Free Christians Issue 7802 15 September 2012

**In the 18th  
Century  
Unitarians  
stood up for  
freedom**



THE ATTACK ON THE OLD MEETING HOUSE, JULY 14TH, 1791.

# Their homes and churches burned

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*Shame to men: devil to devil damn'd.*  
**THE TREACHEROUS REBEL, AND BIRMINGHAM RIOTER.**



# The INQUIRER

THE UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN PAPER

Established 1842

The Inquirer is the oldest  
Nonconformist religious newspaper

**"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."**

*From the Object passed at the  
General Assembly of the Unitarian and  
Free Christian Churches 2001*

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## Inquiring Words Olympics brought joy

By Alan Ruston

What an excitement the Olympics were – a departure from the ordinary. After the doubts, uncertainties and it must admitted the back biting which took place in the lead-up to the Games, we all can recognise they went off very well.

Perhaps the most heartening side issue was the number of volunteers who helped in so many ways, not least in guiding visitors through our transport system. The Paralympics were a fresh event, with its own set of new volunteers. A friend of mine acted as an 'ambassador' guiding people round the complexities of Waterloo station. As with the main Olympics the new volunteers were given a distinctive outfit to wear, written instructions, money for their lunch and three days training. An amazing piece of organisation.

The large number of people who have served without recompense was, for me, unexpected. It shows that despite repeated signs that people won't join or volunteer in 2012, some hope exists that this spirit of free giving of time and effort may carry over into other areas of British life. We must hope so, as the volunteering for the Games has definitely been a beacon light in what is so often a dark unfriendly individualised world.

Being a historian of Unitarianism I asked myself how *The Inquirer* greeted the earlier British Olympics in 1908 and 1948. In 2012, of course, part of the issue of 7 July was devoted to it with an editorial and articles by Cliff Reed and Julian Meek. In 1908 there was no mention of the Olympics at all. The Games were outside the purview and tone of the journal as were any sporting events not connected with our churches. I expected more coverage in 1948, but there was only one item in August as the Games were closing. It was a poem by A.R.T reproduced from the *Evening Standard* under the heading, 'The XIV Olympic Games, London, July 29 to August 14'

*You, who trod Gethsemane*

*Too young:*

*Who walked with anguish*

*Through the childhood years,*

*Condemned by Age*

*To forfeit that sweet ignorance of fear*

*Which Age itself had early, full enjoyed,*

*Forgive us now.*

*No credit to ourselves we take*

*That you in beauty*

*And strength of youth*

*Stand ready to enraise the Torch*

*Whose dimmed flame*

*Now gutters in our*

*Limp, inexperienced hands.*

*We can but speak,*

*And let humanity have voice,*

*"Look well on us*

*Look kindly well on how we wrought*

*And looking, learn*

*The lesson which eluded us*

*That man is one*

*And part of God's intent*

*That if there's ill for one*

*For all there's no content."*

Sport in those earlier years did not have the impact in society that it does today but personally I feel our predecessors could have been a little more unbending in their seriousness. We are in many ways different today to the Unitarians of yesteryear, be that for good or ill. But I do suspect that we may enjoy things more and have a lighter touch.

*Alan Ruston is a member of the Watford Fellowship.*



# Revolutionary Unitarians paid a price

By Anthony Dawson

This year sees the 220<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the conferring of French citizenship upon some of the most prominent Unitarians in British history: the Rev Dr Joseph Priestley, the Rev Richard Price and Jeremy Bentham.

Also granted citizenship was the abolitionist William Wilberforce and his ally Thomas Clarkson. This honour was due to their religious and political radicalism, and indeed Priestley and Price were elected as members of the French National Convention (the revolutionary government which replaced the 'ancien regime' Monarchy of Louis XVI in 1789). We often forget the radical message of our Unitarian movement and with the likes of jingoistic popular historical fiction such as 'Sharpe' or 'Flashman' forget that not everyone in Britain was opposed to the French Revolution or to Napoleon Bonaparte. Both had vocal and active supporters in this country, especially amongst religious and political radicals, not least amongst them Unitarians, who agreed wholeheartedly with Liberty, Equality and Fraternity.

## Support for the Revolution

Unitarians together with other British radicals welcomed the French revolution: they interpreted it as a move toward modernity, the throwing off of the old absolute monarchy of the Bourbons and breaking the power of the Roman Catholic Church, moving toward a more enlightened constitutional model of government. The humanist and Unitarian William Hazlitt spoke for many in his famous account of the revolution:

*'A new world was opening to the astonished sight. Scenes, lovely as hope can paint, dawned upon the imagination; visions of unsullied bliss lulled the senses, and hid the darkness or surrounding objects, rising in bright succession and endless gradations, like the steps of that ladder which was once set up on the earth and whose top reached to heaven. Nothing was too mighty for this new-begotten hope; and the path that led to human happiness seems as plain as the pictures in "Pilgrim's Progress" leading to Paradise.'*

As our Chief Officer Derek McAuley recently pointed out in his blog, Unitarians in South Wales sang the Marseillaise and it was translated into Welsh and regularly sung well into the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century!

Priestley's sermon on the matter was printed at the request of no fewer than seven congregations of Dissenters; Dr William Shepherd in Liverpool, the Rev Isaac Worsley at Bristol, the Rev John Holland at Bolton and Lewis Loyd at Failsworth all preached and published sermons in praise of the revolution in France. The Revs Theophilus Lindsey and Thomas Belsham both celebrated the revolution. The Rev Richard Price – a republican, who supported the American colonists in their War of Independence – was invited to preach to the French National Assembly but declined the offer and instead wrote an address to which Edmund Burke wrote his famous reply 'Reflection on the French Revolution'. The Rev Dr Joseph Towers of London along with Priestley wrote their own replies to Burke – Priestley's going through three editions in one year. Perhaps the two most famous replies to Burke were those of the Quaker Thomas Paine 'The Rights of Man' and the Unitarian Mary Wollstonecraft 'Vindication of the Rights of Women'. Both were friends of Richard Price, their mentor. The Unitarian Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge



Rioters Burning Dr Priestley's House at Birmingham, 14 July 1791. Susan Lowndes Marques Collection, via Wikimedia Commons

welcomed the stir the very public debate aroused, but could not have predicted the violent backlash against supporters of the revolution in Britain.

## Backlash

In July 1791 at Birmingham the two Unitarian churches, the New Meeting and Old Meeting and Kingswood together with Priestley's house were burned down. The houses of prominent supporters of Priestley, such as William Hutton, TE Lee, William Russell or John Taylor, were also burned. There were serious disturbances in Norwich and Liverpool and a riot in Manchester, which was only quelled after the Unitarian Thomas Walker – a member of Cross Street – managed to quell the crowd.

The situation grew worse in 1792 following Britain's declaration of War with France. A printer in Newark was arrested for printing 'The Rights of Man' and a Baptist Minister, the Rev William Winterbotham was imprisoned for four years in July 1793 for a sermon in which he said 'every man in a land of liberty had a right to know how his money was applied'. Unitarians at Oxford and Cambridge Universities came under attack: the Rev William Frend, formerly Fellow of Jesus College, the Rev T Fyshe Palmer of Queen's College and the Rev Jebb of St John's College were all hounded out of office; Fyshe Palmer was deported to Australia for correcting a handbill for an organisation called 'The Society of Friends of Liberty' whilst minister at Dundee.

In 1795 the Prime Minister, William Pitt, suspended the right of Habeas Corpus and a series of Acts were passed which limited the last vestiges of civil liberty and restricted gatherings of working men. At Manchester a 'Thinking Club' was established where its members sat in silence to 'dwell upon the evils of our time'. At its first meeting 300 were present and when an attempt was made to break up the meeting (the members of the club had been accused of treason) no charges could be made because nothing treasonous had been said! At Bolton the Rev John Holland and Thomas Paine were burned in effigy before the church door and an effigy of Thomas Paine and copies of his book were burned in Birmingham at the door of the minister, the Rev Joshua Toulmin.

(Continued on next page)



# Continue to strive for liberté



*Napoleon: After Anne-Louis Girodet de Roussy-Trioson via Wikimedia Commons  
(Continued from previous page)*

## Napoleon

William Hazlitt and the Rev Robert Aspland both admired Napoleon I. Whilst Hazlitt saw him as the 'saviour of the French revolution' and 'great liberator from Tyrants of the ancient regime', Aspland was more sceptical. He praised Napoleon's egalitarian politics but abhorred his war-like methods. He also claimed that Napoleon was used as an 'excuse' for war; he found no favour with the argument of 'Divine Right of Kings' and believed that populations should be at liberty to choose their rulers.

He wrote 'Bonaparte is an excuse for war ... his spirit of Liberty predominates Europe ... and there is a spirit dominant in those in power which cannot rest in peace, but will find in him some plea for war!' Forty years later, the American Unitarian theologian and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson described Napoleon I as 'the man of the 19<sup>th</sup> century' and that he was the 'rallying call for all those who seek Liberty'. Whilst not necessarily supporting his methods, he certainly supported Napoleon's politics and referred to his nephew, the future Emperor Napoleon III as 'the Napoleon of peace'.

The Minister of Cross Street Chapel, Manchester saw Napoleon as 'heaven sent, predicted in Scripture' bringing with him a new world order. The Vicar of Bolton, however, whilst also seeing Napoleon predicted in scripture, saw him as God's instrument of vengeance against a 'greedy' Britain and had been sent by God to destroy sinful Britain and its love of money.

## Pacifism

In 1798 the Rev Gilbert Wakefield, a one-time Tutor at Manchester Academy, was put on trial for treason due to his pacifism, claiming that war was contrary to the spirit of Christianity. The following year the Rev Benjamin Flower was arrested and sent to Newgate Gaol. He had founded the radical newspaper 'The Cambridge Intelligencer'. Indeed, the pacifism of Unitarian congregations in Failsworth, Bolton, Dukinfield and Leeds led to reprisals; the church in Failsworth being attacked by a mob shouting in favour of 'The King, Church and Country'.

Obviously, pacifism was linked to treachery, just as in a

modern example when President GW Bush said 'you are either with us or against us'. The Unitarian Colonel Joseph Hanson (grandson of the Minister at Gorton Chapel, latterly Brookfield Church) 'the Weaver's Friend' supported the emerging Luddite movement with their demands for a fair wage and employment. In 1808 when he and his regiment, The Manchester and Salford Independent Rifles, were asked by the Manchester Magistrates to police a mob at St George's Field, Manchester, he refused to have his men fire on the crowd and was therefore arrested.

A Grand Jury in Lancaster found him guilty of aiding and abetting the weavers of Manchester in a 'conspiracy to raise their wages'. He was fined £100 and imprisoned for six months. Hanson was instrumental in a 'Monster Petition for Peace' which circulated the industrial North West in summer 1807 following Napoleon's peace with Russia, finally bringing peace to Europe (however short-lived). He pointed out that wages in Manchester, Preston, Wigan, Bolton and Stockport had been artificially depressed at a time of increasing cost of living and mechanisation had left thousands destitute as a direct result of ten years incessant warfare with France.

The petition started in January 1808 at Bolton Unitarian Church amassed 17,000 signatures in favour of peace. In 1808 and again between 1811-1812 there were strikes amongst the weavers of the North West due to mechanisation and low wages; the cotton industry was particularly hard-hit between 1812 and 1815 due to Britain being at War with America and blockading the US ports. From 1812 this unrest against mechanisation and low wages became characterised as 'Luddism' (named after the fictitious 'General Ludd') and Unitarian congregations, such as Bolton, supported it. But when the unrest became violent, the Unitarians rapidly distanced themselves.

## Continuing to strive towards the ideal

Unitarians may have been naïve in their idealised support of the French revolution, but they did so and maintained their support for Liberty, Equality and Fraternity against a backdrop of fierce hostility and repression directed both against their religious belief (rejection of the Holy Trinity was punishable by death until 1813) and of their politics. Indeed, Unitarian support for a meritocratic ideal and pacifism re-appeared 40 years later – during the revolutions across Europe in 1848 and the Crimean War (1853-1856).

They never lost their faith in God or humanity. Whilst being deported to Australia, Fyshe Palmer sang the hymn 'The Head that Once was Crowned with Thorns' believing he – and others – had been 'sacrificed' because of their belief in civil and religious liberty. Sarah Flower Adams, the daughter of Benjamin Flower, inspired by her father's imprisonment and suffering, penned the hymn 'Nearer my God to Thee', which rose to international fame 100 years ago because of the Titanic disaster.

Whilst abhorring the violence and war-like methods of the French 1<sup>st</sup> Republic and 1<sup>st</sup> Empire, they agreed with the egalitarian and meritocratic principles of those regimes, political principles they and other radicals fought hard for in Britain in the coming century and beyond. Indeed, may we all still strive for, and work towards Liberty, Equality and Fraternity not only in our congregations but society at large.

*Ant Dawson is Unitarian Chaplain, Salford City College.*



# Andy Pakula leaves GA Executive

Saying he believes the future of Unitarianism is bleak under the General Assembly's Executive Committee, **Andy Pakula** quit after just 3 years. In this *Inquirer* interview, he explains why.

**Why have you decided to leave the Executive Committee? You said you 'have become convinced that the EC and GA cannot make the kinds of changes needed to prevent the coming demise of our movement'. What, specifically, do you mean by that?**

After much reflection, I have concluded that the movement's challenges are too profound to be addressed adequately by the tools available to the EC. Because of the nature of our General Assembly, the change that the EC can drive is limited to relatively small adjustments to the way the movement as a whole operates. The GA seems to operate as though we are conducting 'business as usual' when, in fact, this approach is inadequate for our times.

Our situation is dire. As Huw Thomas projected in his outgoing presentation as the GA honorary treasurer, without some very drastic turn-around in our fortunes, the GA organisation itself will be forced to dissolve in less than 10 years. At the same time, the majority of our congregations are too small and too elderly to reinvigorate themselves without an infusion of funds, expertise, and leadership. In the absence of a GA organisation, many of these congregations will fold.

Thus I see ahead of us a future wherein the current Unitarian movement is reduced to a relatively small number of surviving congregations linked informally and lacking central support.

The EC and the GA exist to serve the existing congregations. As such, they are constrained to act as those congregations wish. The drastic changes needed to change this dismal picture of the future would be too unpopular with too many individuals and congregations within our movement to proceed with the urgency needed.

Finally, the nature of our organisation – devoted as it is to consultation and group process and lacking a single identified leader – necessarily prevents the emergence of the sort of visionary, inspirational leadership that could help to inspire the movement at large to support revitalising change.

**If it were possible to make changes unilaterally, what would you do to prevent the demise of Unitarianism in Britain?**

I would divert as much financial and human resources as possible to revitalising those congregations that – because of demographics and other similar factors – appear to have strong potential for the future. I would mobilise all the funds and talent possible to help these groups become strong, relevant communities that can thrive to create a vibrant Unitarian future.

**You plan to continue your work on 2020, the initiative to facilitate the creation of new and renewed congregations with funds and with expertise. What will the relationship be between 2020 and the General Assembly? Will there be any representation from the Executive Committee on the 2020 Board?**

In my view, 2020 remains the greatest single hope for the

future of Unitarianism in the UK. This programme, if funds can be successfully raised, will create revitalized and vital new congregations. I only wish that more resources from GA and other sources could be mobilised to fuel these efforts.

The EC remains closely connected with and strongly supportive of 2020. (EC Convenor) Martin Whitell is a 2020 board member and serves and EC member and convener. I do not expect my resignation from the EC to affect 2020 adversely. In fact, it means that I will have more time and energy available to commit.

**How much money has 2020 raised thus far?**

2020 fund-raising has not yet begun as the 2020 board feels it is essential to have 'all our ducks in a row' first. We do not wish to ask for the kind of generous gifts required until we can clearly answer all of the relevant questions of potential donors.

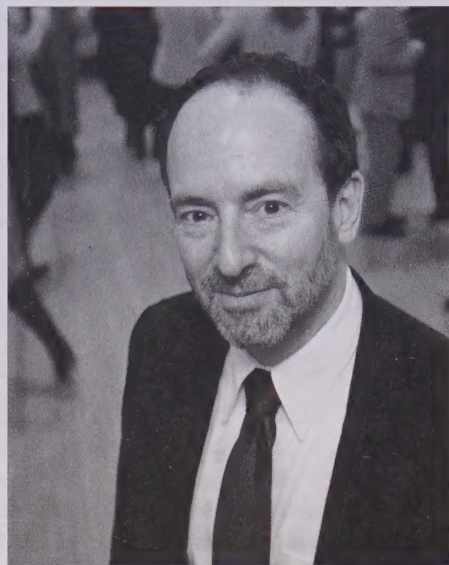
**How has your role as a leader within the movement affected your ministry and your faith?**

My faith remains as strong as ever. I know in my bones and in my heart that Unitarianism offers a tremendously powerful and transformative path to people in this century. I know that our movement can change lives and change communities for the better. My passion for continuing to share our faith endures.

Membership in the EC has, however, left me discouraged by our prospects for significant survival in the short and medium term. Our membership seems unprepared to make the great leap that will be required to become a truly relevant, thriving, movement. Our failure to change in this way has virtually guaranteed huge losses to come.

In the long term, however, I believe that the Unitarian congregations that remain will find their strength and begin the process of creating a new Unitarianism – very different from the Unitarianism of today – that will be a significant force for good in individual lives, in local communities, and throughout this nation.

*The Rev Andy Pakula is minister at Newington Green and Islington, the New Unity congregations.*



*'The drastic changes needed to change this dismal picture of the future would be too unpopular with too many individuals and congregations within our movement to proceed with the urgency needed.'*

*– Andy Pakula*



# It's time to help 'Ser

For 50 years, Unitarians have been sending children to Great Hucklow, giving holidays to underprivileged youngsters who might not otherwise spend time in the countryside. In this interview, retired Unitarian minister **Peter Godfrey** takes a look back and urges readers to dig deep for this worthy cause.

**How long have you been involved with SACH and what prompted you to get involved originally?**

I started the Send a Child to Hucklow Fund 50 years ago with a letter to *The Inquirer* asking for Christmas gifts to give children in need a holiday at Great Hucklow. The letter was prompted by two things. The Unitarian Holiday Centre (as it was then) at Great Hucklow was in difficulty. A special committee had come up with good suggestions for increasing weekend bookings but the centre faced closure if more was not made of mid-week accommodation. At the time of this worry I was friendly with an organiser of a Family Service Unit and knew about children for whom he cared who never had a holiday. So I brought the two things together.

The appeal raised enough for a holiday for one group of children. Unitarians took it to heart – one early generous giver said she was 'sending her subscription'. The idea caught on and very soon more groups were sent each year until we reached the maximum possible of ten or eleven groups per year. This is the number we now send each year.

**What do you think the holidays do for the youngsters? And what makes the impact – the setting, the activities, the leaders?**

The holidays do many things for the children. Most of them are seeing the countryside for the first time. Having meals at a table is often a new experience. We encourage as much walk-



*Children on a 'Send-a-Child-to-Hucklow' holiday climb up to Peveril Castle above the village of Castleton, not far from the Nightingale Unitarian Conference Centre, where they stay.*

ing as possible so the children have good exercise. What most of the reports from group leaders, and comments from the children themselves, stress is the freedom they enjoy. The simple freedom to just enjoy being children without the difficulties that often surround them in their homes.

**What is it like when a group of children first arrives at the Nightingale Centre?**

The children's most frequent early reaction is – how posh the accommodation is! There is amazement in some cases at having three meals at once – starter, main course and pudding. One lad asked what a spoon was for. They often say how nice the beds are and to have their own space, wardrobe or drawer.

**Are there any particular children or specific moments you remember over the years?**

I have many special memories. On one of the earliest holiday we were standing at Monsal Head looking down along the dale and one girl said 'I didn't know there was so much countryside in England'. I remember two boys arriving with one pair of pyjamas between them. In the early years poor footwear was a nightmare and we used to keep a full set of wellingtons at the centre. I also think of the boy who hadn't wanted to go on the holiday and at the end wanted to hide in a cupboard so that he wouldn't have to leave.

**Are there any children who have got back in touch or ever let SACH know how they are doing?**

Children often get back in touch with the groups that have taken them. Frequently these are now schools. One happy memory is of children in one group who had had an enjoyable holiday and afterwards arranged a special fund-raising event to help pay for children who followed them.



*Then-GA President Anne Peart helped launch the 50th Anniversary SACH fund-raising drive by stuffing envelopes for the mail shot.*



# a Child to Hucklow'

## Why do you think the holidays make a difference?

We don't have dramatic aims that the holidays will be life changing. It is enough if the children have a bit of fun that they would not otherwise get. Letters from the children do show that there is often a deeply joyful participation in the country holiday experience and that their horizons are broadened literally and figuratively. Groups come with their own specially devised programmes which might be called 'developmental'.

## How do you respond to people who might say that it's more important to support charities that feed or clothe people – rather than one which offers holidays?

The aim should not be either food and clothing or a holiday, but both. These are not ordinary holidays. They are for children who would not otherwise have them. They are a chance to enjoy the countryside, to live for a few days free of home cares and problems (some of them are carers at home) and to have three good meals a day for five days. Perhaps the children get a taste of different 'life food' – an awareness that walking and simple pleasures can be enjoyable, that there is something special in meals taken together, good manneredly; that adults can be consistent and reliable; that animals need not be frightening.



Children do a lot of walking on their holidays at Great Hucklow.

## How does your involvement in SACH relate to your Unitarian faith?

A key feature of my Unitarian faith is 'the celebration of life'. This means that children too should have the opportunity to enjoy life and the fund tries to provide this.

## Why do you think SACH is a good project for Unitarians to support?

The Unitarian Homes at Great Hucklow started with holidays for children, firstly camping at the end of the 19th century, with the initiative of the Rev Lawrence Scott of Manchester and the Rev Charles Peach of Sheffield. The Send a Child to Hucklow Fund resurrected an old Unitarian tradition. It is a tradition that is good for Unitarians to continue because it is a happy and valuable experience for deprived children. Our 50 years' existence has helped the Nightingale Centre to survive. The Fund also has an appeal to Unitarians in that income given in memory of someone is invested so that the interest is useful every year thereafter. As the only British national Unitarian Social Action charity it continues a proud tradition of social

The SACH children gain an 'awareness that walking and simple pleasures can be enjoyable, that there is something special in meals taken together, good manneredly; that adults can be consistent and reliable; that animals need not be frightening.'

– Peter Godfrey

concern. Time and time again over the 50 years I have been astounded at the variety of things people have done for the fund and their amazing generosity.

## Do you have any idea how many children have benefited from the holidays over the past 50 years? How is this year's fund-raising drive going? Are you planning for another 50 years?

We now send approximately 200 children each year and have done for several years. There were fewer children in the early years so my guess would be that we have provided holidays for at least 7500 children.

This year's special fund raising is going very well and I feel certain that with a good push over this – the last month – we shall achieve our aim of £50,000, even though this is nearly double our usual income. We hope that the splendid regular giving we have enjoyed over the years will not now diminish. It is very encouraging that the Women's League members have taken up the baton for next year.

We are certainly planning for the future. That is why we are having our special appeal this year. For the past two or three years we have spent more than our income. So one of the aims of the appeal is to build up our capital reserve in order to provide an increase in income from investments. We have recruited new trustees and our secondary 50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee aim of encouraging congregations to seek out deserving local groups is bearing fruit.

The children have not changed and they still get the same thing out of the holiday – a few happy carefree days to enjoy just being children. Sadly, if anything, it seems the need is at least as great as when we started.

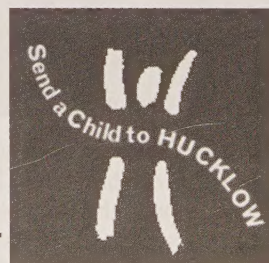
## How to help

To donate to the Send-a-Child-to-Hucklow fund, please see:

[www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk](http://www.sendachildtohucklow.org.uk) Or contact Donations Treasurer:

Rev Chris Goacher, 24  
Arlington Drive, Alvaston,  
Derby DE24 0AUQ Tel:  
01332 609790 Or, e-mail:

[Donations\\_Treasurer@sendachildtohucklow.org.uk](mailto:Donations_Treasurer@sendachildtohucklow.org.uk)





# Zen and the art of crime fiction

I have mentioned before the old joke about: The second reading in a Unitarian service is always from The (Manchester) Guardian. I think Unitarians well know that useful stuff can be found almost anywhere.

We are lucky in the range of prose and poetry offered to us. However, I am more likely to quote from a crime novel than anything else.

Because I do like crime stories. Not only do you get a good story with a beginning and a middle and an end, not only do the good end happily and the bad unhappily, but you also get the occasional metaphysical or philosophical insight.

How about this for a summary of Unitarian thinking on matters of faith?

"One of those apocryphal stories laboratory scientists like to tell. A scientist is driving along a country road with a friend when they come upon a flock of sheep grazing on a hill side. 'Those sheep have been shorn recently,' observes the friend. 'On one side, anyway,' says the scientist.

"That isn't to say that the good scientist doesn't *think* that the sheep aren't shorn on both sides. He just recognizes that he doesn't know it, that it's a theory, a hypothesis based on evidence that remains to be proved."

And then this as a rejection of Christian orthodoxy?

"...she wondered why life wasn't enough for most people, why they had to hide in cathedrals, mosques and temples and rehearse human-born fictions of something yet to come, practise infinite subtleties of castigation of flesh and mind, as if by limiting pleasure and freedom in their one guaranteed existence they might earn kudos in another, one from which no explorers had ever returned alive."

And can you find a better summing-up of what real religion is about than the last sentence of this?

A group of New Age traveller-types have descended on a church.

"Where have they all come from? What are they looking for?"

'Portents and wonders,' declared the vicar, spreading his palms evangelically. 'The word of the Lord as revealed in the pattern of the flame.' He sounded bitter.



'They are harmless, aren't they?'

'Not really,' said Parsons grimly. 'I don't think they're a danger to life and limb. But they're a threat to the Church – my Church, what I believe in. They are looking for magic tricks. They want the walking on water not the daily commitment of responsible Christian living. They call themselves pilgrims: actually they'd follow any Pied Piper with a catchy new tune. That's not religion. It's the same urge that makes people buy lottery scratch cards. They want something for nothing. What my Church offers is something for something.'"

And, of course, we should take the readings and the address of our services seriously. They are carefully chosen, as the selections above were, and deserve more than, as it were, a cursory listen. A person you invited and paid chose these because s/he thought they would enhance your spiritual life. So talk about them, think about them.

In my ideal Unitarian church/chapel/meeting house, the service would always be followed by an earnest discussion as we, the congregation, try to suck every last gram of marrow from the bones presented to us. Some churches do this. For example, at Oxford a keen group goes off after coffee to eat sandwiches and discuss the theme of the service. Very gratifying to the preacher! Do you do something similar? Write in.

At Upper Pocklington we talk about important things over coffee: – the drains, the closure of the post office in Deacon Street and the fact that bourbons are cheaper at Lidl than Asda.

*Dorothy Haughton is a worship leader in the Midlands.*

1 William G Tapply *Death at Charity's Point*

2 Nevada Barr *Hard Truth*

3 Jo Bannister *Fathers and Sins*



Unitarian General Assembly President Lis Dyson-Jones visited Rosslyn Hill Chapel in Hampstead recently and conducted a service to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the current chapel. Lis took as her theme 'loving communities'. Her address was a challenge to the Chapel community to think about how we welcome the stranger. A bring-and-share lunch was organised after the service to facilitate a meeting of the president and the community. (left) Chris Mason, member of RHUC management committee, Lis and the Rev Feargus O'Connor, minister at Golders Green. (Photo right) Lis chats with the community.



# UCCN teaches how to promote church

By Lesley Harris

Registration is now open for the next Unitarian Communication Coordinators' Network (UCCN) weekend to be held at the Nightingale Unitarian Conference Centre at Great Hucklow 2-4 November.

Yvonne Aburrow will teach about social media. John Wilkinson and James Barry will cover webcam work, podcasting and webcasting. Ann Peart will help with statements and short devotional pieces. This work should provide a central resource of inspiring material for all Unitarians.

The UCCN's last weekend was a happy and dynamic one, enthusiastically and skilfully presented by Angela Maher, Melanie Haberstroh, James Barry and Yvonne Aburrow, plus a fascinating account of the celebrations of 300 years at Bury St Edmonds, presented by Martin Gienke. We also had a most inspiring Sunday service plus valuable guidance throughout the weekend from the Rev Dr Ann Peart, the then-President of the Unitarian General Assembly. We covered websites, PR, photos, style and etiquette.

Angela did the website presentation concentrating on What, Who and How. The "what" was what we want our websites to achieve, i.e. to encourage people to come to services and other events, to know what we are about, and to answer practical questions. The "who" was the question "who is the website for", the answer – "for whoever is looking at it", e.g.: newcomers, visitors, spiritual quest seekers of all sorts, researchers, press. The "how" covered various things, such as how would we like our congregation to appear to newcomers, answer: friendly dynamic and enjoying what goes on, and also "how" the website should look, i.e. tidy, well designed, easy to read, uncluttered, with a proper colour scheme.

In her talk about PR for congregations, Melanie provided us with a sound PR structure and several forward planning techniques. A vision is a desired outcome, e.g. "Our chapel will be a vibrant and inclusive place of worship". A mission is a goal, e.g. "Our purpose is to help people meet their spiritual needs".

Our strategy is a plan designed to achieve our goals, including consideration of who we want to come to our church, what services we want them to use, when would they come, where are they located, what do they need. Melanie then took us through a specific PR objective, e.g.: "generate more



*UCCN participants enjoyed a weekend of exchanging ideas at the Nightingale Unitarian Conference Centre. Registration is open for the November conference.*

income from event bookings". So if our church was suitable for weddings, we could put relevant messages on our website directed at prospective wedding couples. If our premises were suitable for activity groups we would describe our spacious church hall. If our premises were appropriate for conferences we could explain we had good technical facilities. Other tactics could be press releases, articles, letters, radio/TV interviews, linking up with local activities or organising a special event such as a coffee morning and using it as a tool to talk about the church.

I am a die hard 'photo-phobe', but I was completely won over by James's presentation on taking good PR photos. Be warned, there is no such thing as a spontaneous photo, truly spontaneous photos are always planned. A photo should tell a story and every bit of the image must help to tell the story. A photo should have happy people, lots of energy, and good lighting. The most important part of the story should always be the centrepiece of the photo. We were shown lots of good and not so good photos, and we were assured that a genuine camera was still, even now, a lot better than a mobile phone.

Yvonne's presentation explained that style was to do with our writing, particularly on websites and in newsletters. We got useful advice about fonts and consistent clear presentation. I had not heard of the DUWIT website template used by the General Assembly. It is very helpful for maintaining websites and you can also get website hints and tips from the UCCN blog. Regarding etiquette, Yvonne advised that it is essential to ensure that your congregation really understand the Unitarian ethos and values, and to do in-reach as well as out-reach.

All the presentations were followed up by "Tactics and Tools" workshops and also with plenty of time for fun and just being together, and the Sunday service, given by Ann Peart, provided a time of quiet reflection. Many of the presentations were videoed and can be seen by going to [www.unitarian.org.uk/tv](http://www.unitarian.org.uk/tv) and selecting the 'Videos' tab.

We invite everyone who is interested to come and be part of this project. More information is available at <http://www.uccn.org.uk/Nov12.htm>

Or contact Joan Wilkinson on 01332 814055 or at [joan@yorkshiregirl.org.uk](mailto:joan@yorkshiregirl.org.uk)

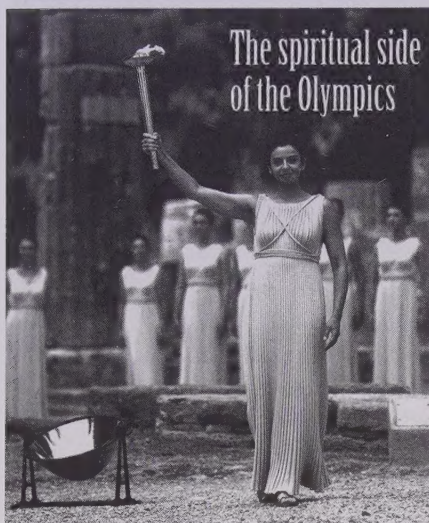


*Angela Maher offered advice on church web sites. Photo by James Barry*



# Letters to the Editor

 **The INQUIRER** 90p  
www.inquirer.org.uk  
The voice of British and Irish Unitarians and Free Christians Issue 7798 7 July 2012



## Olympic spirit once meant something more

To the Editor:

Re: The Spiritual Side of the Olympics  
– Cliff Reed's article in *The Inquirer*,  
7 July

Thank you, Cliff Reed, for the article drawing attention to the fact, not sufficiently emphasised nowadays, that the first audience of the New Testament were Greeks and/or firmly based in the traditions, theology, culture and disciplines of ancient Greece; and that the Games (like the drama) were religious in origin: they brought no material reward to the victors other than a laurel wreath.

Perhaps someone has written a learned tome on the influence which this fact had in the birth and development of Christianity: if not, how about it, Cliff – a suitable hobby for your retirement? Talking of which, I'm sure we Norfolk Unitarians send best wishes for that occasion when it comes.

**Sophia Hankinson**  
Norwich

## Recent *Inquirer* offered much to readers

To the Editor:

I enjoyed the 21 July issue of *The Inquirer* ...

From 'the torch relay best plans going up in flames' through Frank Walker's 'Hell and the underground' and Derek McAuley's 'fight for equal marriage.' My question on the latter is, when will we call for parliament to drop the 19<sup>th</sup>

Century restrictions on where ministers can perform marriages? When will England have the religious freedom on marriages now allowed in Scotland? I will be glad to send anyone a copy of the British International Association for Religious Freedom Resolution calling for this ... especially to any church which might consider endorsing it as a GA Resolution.

I was challenged by John Hands' *Inquirer* article calling for a unifying Unitarian cause. To me the cause is in our name: Unitarian is the oneness church. John, oneness need not use the word God. Buddhists, Hindus, and Humanists can all affirm oneness ... knowing the reality is greater than any name. See: <http://bit.ly/OXSxD> and read the last two pages of the paper I gave earlier this month at Waterperry House, Oxford.

Oneness does not just means treating everyone as an equal. It means working together as a common community. Earth is like the ship Titanic. Letting all passengers share the deck chairs equally will not save the ship. Ask the Unitarian architect who designed it. In the July 21 *Inquirer*, Bob Pounder taught me of the 'compassion for the poor' of Bob Marley, like that of Jesus and the compassion taught by Karen Armstrong. Funny Old World, John Midgley's column, gave me three good laughs.

And I enjoyed the colour photos of old friends like David Dawson.

Thanks to the editor and to the Yorkshire Unitarian Union for colour sponsorship of the issue.

**Richard Boeke**  
Chair, British Chapter, IARF

## Not all found *Unitarian* article helpful

To the Editor:

Dorothy Haughton (*Inquirer*, 1 September) suggests the recent article published in *The Unitarian* on sado-masochism offered an 'intelligent commentary' on the subject. I'm not sure it did.

I thought much of the reasoning dubious, particularly the author's implication that the desire for openness in this area is equivalent to the struggle for tolerance towards homosexuality. Surely that's a travesty?

By contrast, as an illustration of how

human sexuality can be discussed seriously and in a deeply spiritual context, may I recommend a recent article by Carla Grosch-Miller entitled 'Eros, Sexuality and the Ministry'. It appeared in the Spring-Summer edition of *The Liberal Christian Herald*, and can be viewed on the Unitarian Christian Association website.

See: [bit.ly/O6w7Lx](http://bit.ly/O6w7Lx)

**Jim Corrigan**

Editor, *The Liberal Christian Herald*

## On death and hope

To the Editor:

Acceptance of death does not imply the rejection of hope. The dying may hope for loving and devoted care from family and friends and from medical professionals. They may hope that unbearable pain and agony may be assuaged and if possible eliminated by appropriate means, even if this involves the merciful hastening of death's deliverance.

Hope by itself cannot banish the reality of death, but we may surely be given hope that our passage through the gates of death will be made as gentle and as loving a one as human kindness can make it.

**Frank Walker**  
Cambridge

## Inquirer letters policy

Letters should be succinct. It is preferable that they are sent by email to [inquirer@btinternet.com](mailto:inquirer@btinternet.com). Typewritten or legible handwritten submissions may be sent to the editor at 46A Newmarket Road, Cringleford, Norwich NR4 6UF.

Letters should be signed with the writer's full name and, if applicable, the name of the group or congregation with which the writer is affiliated. A postal address and telephone number are required, for verification purposes. Letters will be edited for length and content and may appear in an excerpted form. Any affiliations listed with letter writers' names are for identification purposes only, and should not suggest the view expressed is representative of that body.



# Minister shortage may bring radical plans

By Anne Mills

I read with interest the two articles by Iain Brown in the 7 July *Inquirer* ('What to do about the shortage of ministers?' and 'Collaborative leadership is the key').

Congregations with ministers of their own possibly do not give a great deal of thought to the decline in numbers of ministers – until they themselves need to recruit. The current shortage is, of course, not unique to the Unitarian denomination; fairly recently, the Roman Catholic church has persuaded some Anglican ministers to join its ranks, and the Church of England relies quite heavily on its non-stipendiary vicars. Not long ago, I came across an advertisement in *Saga Magazine* for people to undertake training to enable them to conduct funeral-services. A sign of the times, perhaps?

Former Unitarian General Secretary Jeff Teagle calculated that, by 2017, if no action was taken, the Unitarian movement would have only 32 ministers, most of whom would be over 50 years old. Whilst not wishing to denigrate the efforts of various groups within the denomination, I do wonder whether it is possible to retrieve the situation, so that more – younger – people could be recruited for training for the Ministry. But this would have to involve a process of continuous assessment and effort; the concept of the "repeater action" is truly apt.

In an attempt to define the problem (with apologies for any lack of original thought!), I have wondered why so few people, nowadays, seek to enter the ministry. Is a two-year full-time training-course off-putting, or is there a real lack of sense of vocation? Is the stipend felt to be too low, or are the demands of the work perceived as too arduous, too numerous, and too far-ranging?

However, if we are obliged to reject the conventional, traditional rôle of "the Minister", or if we prefer to, this

raises problems of its own, in my opinion, despite the many innovative suggestions as to how to fill the gap. There must be *some* leadership within a congregation, however that is organised.

I admit to a feeling of some unease at the prospect of being ministered unto by a committee. And what would happen if a suitable team could not be assembled because insufficient numbers of people were willing or able to perform the various portions of the task? Equally, there might not be volunteers for lay-preacher or counselling courses; in any case, these take time to complete, and more time before tasks are learnt and experience gained. This could be the case, especially, in an ageing congregation. If a preacher has to be found, every Sunday, this becomes an exhausting and time-consuming task (of which I have had some experience!)

My definition of a 'spiritual leader' is one who devotes time, experience and energy to caring for a congregation, not just in terms of the theological, but in a pastoral sense – visiting, comforting the bereaved, listening to personal problems when individuals feel that their minister is the only possible recipient of their confidences; this, to me, is an extremely important and valuable function of ministry – which seems likely to be lost.

We, at Bury, have been without a minister now for almost two years. We are most grateful for the assistance we have received, during this time, from retired ministers and lay-preachers, and, especially, from the Rev Beryl Allerton for her involvement and commitment. Unlike some congregations, we do have dedicated funding for ministry; our concerns lie elsewhere. Our current help can only be temporary, and, in the near future, we will be faced with decisions which could well prove unsettling, difficult and radical.

*Anne Mills is a member of Bury Unitarians, Lancashire.*

## UCA raises £5,000 for Sierra Leone

By Jim Corrigan

The Unitarian Christian Association (UCA) has reached its target of raising £5,000 for a maternal health project in the West African state of Sierra Leone – and in record time.

A cheque for £5,000 has now been sent to the co-ordinating charity, Christian Aid – and with European Union match-funding, this sum is due to increase to £20,000 for the Kailahun mother and baby project in eastern Sierra Leone.

The UCA began fundraising in October last year, following an appeal by Christian Aid. The UCA says it was confident of reaching the agreed sum by January 2014, but in fact achieved it by the end of April.

"We never dreamt we would achieve our target in less than a year," said the UCA moderator, the Rev Bob Pounder. "The fact that we did so is a tribute to the tremendous response from members of our Unitarian and Free Christian denomination. Individuals gave donations, both large and small, and several congregations joined in the drive in imaginative ways."

"The Unitarian Christian Association is deeply grateful for this speedy and generous response to our appeal – and it is worth recording that many of those who donated were not themselves



*Christian Aid photo of mothers at the hospital*

members of our Association."

The UCA Treasurer, Cathy Fozard, said news from Christian Aid showed exciting progress was being made. "The government hospital in Kailahun (that we are supporting) now has a restored water system and a new solar power system." She said because the Kailahun project was match-funded, the UCA was unable to send further donations at present. However, additional funds being collected would now go to a

Christian Aid project in Kenema Town, also in eastern Sierra Leone, in support of a national campaign to distribute malaria nets throughout the country.

Meanwhile, the General Assembly Chief Officer, Derek McAuley, has congratulated the UCA on its achievement. He recalled he had written for the UCA journal (*The Herald*) in 2011, drawing attention to our denomination's status as a founder member of Christian Aid. "I suggested then that we could do more to make this link real. The UCA have responded to this call for action in a remarkable way," Derek McAuley wrote in his Chief Officer's blog on 16 July.

*The Rev Jim Corrigan has been appointed Minister to Ipswich and Framlingham from October.*



# News in brief



'On a rare sunny Saturday afternoon in July, members of the Westgate Chapel, Wakefield, congregation greatly enjoyed a barbecue at the home of Stephen Carlile. Lovely food and lovely garden. Pictured left to right are Nancy Denison, Joshua Carlile, Stephen Carlile, Melanie Prideaux, Lauren Prideaux, and Ned Prideaux.' Photo by Kate Taylor



## Black Country Diamond Wedding Celebration

Some sixty people gathered at the Old Meeting House, Dudley on Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> July, to celebrate the Diamond Wedding Anniversary of Ken and Barbara Russell (*shown above*). The Preacher was the Rev Penny Johnson, who, as a nine-year-old, was a bridesmaid at Ken and Barbara's wedding.

When Penny later qualified as a Minister, her first ministry was in the Black Country and the first Wedding she celebrated was that of Ken and Barbara's daughter Carol. Readings were given by Gavin Lloyd and the Rev Sue Woolley. The music was provided by Mrs Helen Emery of Coseley and Mr David Mearman of Stourbridge and the hymns included one written by Barbara herself. The gathering of family and friends then adjourned to celebrate the joyous occasion with cakes and drinks.

— Sandy Ellis

## York Unitarians invite you to "go mad and sing!"



Myrna Michell

On Saturday 29 September, York Unitarians will host a fun workshop for so-called non-singers as part of York 50+ Festival. Called "Go MAD and SING!", the workshop will be held at St Saviourgate Unitarian Chapel in York from 2.00-4.00pm. Admission of £2 includes refreshments for thirsty throats.

'Were you told at school that you're a growler, and you should stand at the back and mime?' asks Myrna Michell, leader of the event. 'Well, they were wrong!'

Come along and sing with spirit, hope and pride. There will be no individual singing or testing. Bring your friends, too!' Myrna, musician and minister of York Unitarians, also notes that you don't have to be over 50 to attend. 'The more, the merrier!'

For more about the chapel or York Unitarians, visit [www.ukunitarians.org.uk/york](http://www.ukunitarians.org.uk/york) or see us on Facebook.

## Ministerial Vacancy

New Unity is formed of two congregations (Unity Church Islington and Newington Green Unitarian Church) with an integrated programme of worship, spiritual development and social action. Under their dynamic Minister, who arrived as a student, membership has grown and two services are now offered every Sunday, allowing widely differing expressions of spiritual engagement.

The Minister's initial contract expires in 2013 and the congregation seeks to fill the vacancy with a permanent called Minister. The person appointed will be a fully qualified Minister of Religion on the Roll of the General Assembly with a minimum of 5 years experience in the UK including leadership through a period of significant congregational growth and demonstrated experience working with young adults.

S/he will be able to demonstrate profound spiritual insight, strong interpersonal and pastoral skills, and a compelling vision to grow the membership both numerically and spiritually. GA scale, manse provided. Please contact Rev. Linda Phillips, Director of Ministry, The General Assembly, Essex Hall, 1-6 Essex Street, London WC2 3HY. Closing date: 30/9/12.